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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the Turkish origins of a number of Cypriot-Greek words, explaining how some of these words have undergone a semantic shift. Words of Turkish origin can be divided into three classes: (1) culturally borrowed, those words that introduced a new concept into Cypriot-Greek and have no purely Greek equivalent; (2) doublets, those words that are used in Cypriot-Greek as synonyms for Greek words; and (3) those words that have undergone a change in definition, usually narrowing the meaning of the original Turkish word or changing it altogether. The origin of the semantic shift of a number of words are explored. (MDM)

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THE SEMANTIC ADAPTATION OF TURKISH LOANWORDS IN CYPRIOT-GREEK

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The Semantic Adaptation of Turkish Loan-words in the Greek Cypriot Dialect

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ABSTRACT

Cypriot-Greek (CG) has been influenced by the languages with which it came in contact, including Turkish (TR). This contact resulted in the introduction of many Turkish words present in the dialect today. However, many such loan-words have undergone semantic shift. They do not have the same meaning as their counterpart in Turkish. Semantic shift follows various paths. This paper examines a number of these words and explains the basis for the semantic shift which occurred. In addition, the techniques of Cypriot-Greek speakers in assigning meaning to words they encounter are discussed. Some of these techniques are inaccurate identification of primary features, upgrading of peripheral or secondary features, and assignment of new features according to what is perceptible.

1. INTRODUCTION

As is common in language contact situations, many Turkish words have made their way into the vocabulary of the Cypriot-Greek dialect spoken on Cyprus. At first glance, one would think that these words have the same meaning in both Turkish and the Cypriot-Greek dialect. However, a closer investigation reveals that in many cases a semantic shift has taken place. (It should be noted that some Turkish words discussed are of Arabic origin.)

This paper will examine a number of these words and will try to explain on what grounds the semantic shift occurred. Some of these words were taken from Γιαγκουλλής (1992). In the course of the treatment, reference to semantic features (Lyons (1977) and Weinreich (1972)) will be made in order to locate which features have served as bridges for the transition from the meaning in Turkish to the meaning in Cypriot-Greek. In addition, the non-native speakers' techniques of reassigning meaning to a string of phonemes they encounter will be discussed.

Lexical items will be treated from a synchronic point of view in the way these words are currently used by the two speech communities. Possible diachronic changes are beyond the scope of this paper, and therefore, will not be taken into consideration.

2. WORDS WITHOUT SEMANTIC SHIFT

2.1 *Cultural Borrowing*

My first section will be devoted to those words that have not undergone any semantic alteration. This group can be subdivided into two classes. The first class, the result of cultural borrowing, consists of words that introduced a new concept into the Greek-Cypriot speech community and in the other Greek dialects. Some words in this category are:

TR:	**kuran** /kuˈran/	GR:	**κοράνι**	/koˈrani/	*'The Koran'*
	vezir /vɛˈzir/		**βεζίρης**	/vɛziris/	*'Turkish officer'*
	cami /ʤaˈmɪ/		**τζαμί**	/ʤaˈmi/	*'mosque'*

As can be seen here many of these words are also found in other Greek dialects.

2.2 *Doublets*

The second class comprises words which designate concepts as well as linguistic material describing these concepts already present in the host culture. As a result, there is a large group of doublets or synonyms in the Cypriot Greek dialect. This phenomenon contributes enormously to the richness of the Cypriot Greek lexicon. What follows is a list of semantically unaltered Turkish words in Cypriot Greek.

Turkish	CG Word of Turkish Origin	Original Greek Word
sokak [so'kak]	**σοκάκι** [sokaki]	**δρόμος** *'street'*
at ['at]	**άτι** ['ati]	**άλογο** *'horse'*
mal [mal]	**μάλι** [mali]	**περιουσία** *'property'*
mahalle [mahalɛ]	**μαχαλλάς** [maxalas]	**γειτονιά** *'neighborhood'*
bora ['bɔra]	**μπόρα** [bɔra]	**καταιγίδα** *'rainstorm'*
boy [bɔy]	**μποϊ** [bɔy]	**ύψος** *'height'*
muhtar [muh'tar]	**μουχτάρης** [muxtaris]	**κοινοτάρχης** *'mayor'*
kadı [ka'dı]	**καδής** [kaðis]	**δηκαστής** *'judge'*
çanta ['ʧanta]	**τσέντα** [tsenta]	**θήκη** *'bag'*
dolap [dɔ'lap]	**ντουλάπι** [ntulapi]	**ερμαράκι** *'cupboard'*

3. SEMANTIC SHIFT

We will now examine words which have undergone **semantic shift**. **Semantic narrowing** and **semantic broadening** are the terms used to specify the nature of semantic shift. Semantic narrowing is the process by which the meaning of a word becomes less inclusive or less general than the historically earlier meaning, or in the case of cross-linguistic borrowing, less inclusive than the meaning in the source language. Semantic broadening is the process by which the meaning of a word becomes more general or more inclusive than its earlier meaning.

3.1 *Semantic Narrowing*

The following examples are words that have undergone semantic narrowing, or in terms of features, they have acquired a new feature without changing their existing ones. Some examples from this group are:

TR:		CG:	
corba ['ʧɔrbə] *'generic soup'*		**τσιορβάς** ['ʧɔrvas] *'a kind of soup'*	
+edible		+edible	
+soup		+soup (specific)	
havuz [ha'vuz] *'generic pool'*		**χαβούζα** [xa'vuza] *'lake for sewage'*	
+lake		+lake (specific)	
kitap [kı'tap] *'generic book'*		**κετάπα** [kɛ'taba] *'answer key book'*	
+book		+book (specific)	

I have been unable to discover words that have undergone semantic broadening. This implies, if we use the terms hypernym/hyponym, that linguistic codes seldom seem to borrow a hypernym for an existing set of words in a narrow lexical field. This actually makes sense since the tendency in lexical expansion is to invent a new word in order to define a concept more subtly if the cultural needs require. For example, one of the latest innovations in television production is "high-definition TV". This new product is a more developed, specialized and sophisticated version of TV, therefore, a hyponymic term for television is needed. Any language can exploit its own morphological resources (derivation, coining, etc.) to meet the new need. There are cases in which a language is unable to do so or the result of this internal utilization is not satisfactory on either phonological or

morphological grounds. In such cases the speech community may choose to borrow a word from another language and adapt it morphologically and phonologically. Fashion and coercion may also account for borrowing.

4. REINTERPRETATION/RECLASSIFICATION OF SEMANTIC FEATURES

Perhaps the most productive mechanism that has been applied to Turkish words during their introduction into the Cypriot-Greek lexicon is the reinterpretation and reclassification of the words' semantic features. This mechanism operates on the premise that every word has features whose values are determined by both visible and nonvisible properties. When native speakers use a particular word they sometimes have a referent at their disposal. For example, it may be the case that one talks about a dog at the same time s/he is pointing to the dog or in some other way indicating that s/he is talking about that particular animal. In such cases, when a monolingual speaker (participant A) of one language is listening to another speaker (participant B) (usually a bilingual according to Weinreich (1974)) talking in a different language about something using word X, and at the same time pointing to what s/he is talking about (referent Y), participant A will try to make the connection between X and Y. Without formal translation (maybe by a bilingual speaker) the only evidence speaker A has for the real meaning of X is what s/he perceives with his/her senses. Therefore, s/he concludes, very often erroneously as we will see, that what s/he sees is called by what s/he hears. Unfortunately, this doesn't always work because many lexical items have both perceptible and non-perceptible features. A non-speaker of the language, when not given enough context, will sometimes make a wrong connection between the word and the referent by upgrading a secondary feature (usually a visible one) and/or disregarding a primary feature (usually a non-visible one). At the same time, a word may be perceived differently by two observers. For example, if two interlocutors refer to the local animal we consider man's best friend, one may call it a "dog" and the other a "canine". In such cases, and under the appropriate conditions, semantic shift may occur.

In the following set of words the lexical items in Turkish and Cypriot-Greek are still related but not as closely as in a hypernym/hyponym relationship. The new relationship, as it will be demonstrated, is based on the semantic feature(s) that served as bridges for the transition from the meaning in Turkish to the meaning in Cypriot-Greek. For example:

TR: **şeftali** [ʃɛftaˈli] *'peach'*	CG: **σιεφταλί** [ʃɛftaˈli] *'meatball'*
+edible	+edible
+fruit	+meat
+round	+round

In this case, we can see that most probably the feature(s) edible and/or round have been identified by the Cypriot-Greek speakers as the most prominent (or distinguishing) of the lexical item [ʃɛftaˈli]. Therefore, they have assigned this name to a concept which has similar primary features. A second example:

TR: **çatal** [ʧaˈtal] *'fork'*	CG: **τσιαττάλι** [ʧaˈtali] *'pants'*
+used for eating	+used as a garment
+two long teeth-like extensions	+two long teeth-like extensions

Here we see a very interesting approximation based on the shape of the two objects. "Pants", which looked to the host speech community like "fork", was given the Turkish name for "fork". Of course, the Cypriot-Greek users did not name the new thing πιρούνι/πρότσα ("fork" in Cypriot-Greek) because for them it was not a fork but something similar to a fork. It is also interesting from a

historical cultural point of view that fork pre-existed pants, and was introduced into the Greek Cypriot society during the era of the Ottoman Empire. Apparently those CG speakers who first gave a name to this object thought that it looked like a "cattal" and therefore they adopted this designation. A third example:

TR: **kocakarı** [koʤakarı] *'witch'*	CG: **κοτσιάκαρι** [koʤakari] *'old woman'*
+female	+female
+old	+old
+wrinkled	+wrinkled face
+evil	
+magic power	

In this case a set of individual features were thought by the Cypriot-Greek speakers to be the most salient. The features "+evil" and "+magic power", even though they are more important for the original meaning, were ignored or not perceived at all because they are not determined by visible properties or not always manifested or exhibited. Some other words in this group are:

TR: **takunya** [takunya] *'wooden shoes'*	CG: **τακούνια** [takuɲa] *'heels'*
+shoes	+part of shoes
+wooden	+usually wooden
kalabalık [kalabalık] *'crowded'*	**καλαπαλίκι** [kalapaliki] *'noise'*
+many people	+a lot of noise
+make a lot of noise	
cingene [ʧiŋgɛnɛ] *'Gypsy'*	**τσιενγκένης** [ʤɛŋgɛnis] *'idler'*
+human	+human
+travels around	+hangs around
+ethnicity: Gypsy	+no particular ethnicity
turfanda [turfandə] *'early in season'*	**τορφαντά** [tɔrfanda] *'fresh'*
+vegetables	+vegetables
+ripen early in season	+fresh

Another large group of words that underwent semantic change is generally characterized by the fact that the meaning of the word in Cypriot-Greek represents the physical evidence of the meaning of the word in Turkish. That is, the borrowing community was not aware of the underlying sense of the word and used it in terms of what the meaning of the word results in or expresses. In many cases the word in question is an adjective describing a human trait, virtue or vice. Virtues and vices are abstract ideas, but are expressed in concrete situations by specific deeds or acts. In the case of borrowing, the concrete situation gives the central meaning of the word. The original peripheral or implied features are upgraded as the word's central figure. For example:

TR: **cesur** [ʤɛsur] *'courageous'*	CG: **τσιεσούρις** [ʤɛsuris] *'belligerent'*
+human trait	+human trait
+virtue	+vice
+inner motivation	+likes fighting
+courage	

It is obvious that the borrowing speech community first encountered this word in given contexts. A courageous person can act in many ways: save a child from a burning house, save someone from drowning, etc. Along the same lines a courageous person is more likely to defend a weak person in a fight and eventually get involved in the fight himself/herself. As a result, since the inner motivation of a courageous person is not visible, such a person is characterized by what can be

observed (in this case, his or her involvement in the fight.) More examples include:

TR:		CG:	
farfara [farfara] *'womanizer'*	+likes women +enjoys being with and talking to women	**φαφλατάς** [fafla'tas] *'someone who talks a lot or talks nonsense'*	+talks a lot
geveze [gɛvɛ'zɛ] *'talkative'*	+human +talks a lot +makes people laugh	**κεβεζές** [gɛvɛzɛs] *'entertaining person'*	+human +makes people laugh

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, multi-cultural societies represent unique situations for inter-cultural interaction. Different cultural groups in a given community exchange aspects of their cultures in order to enrich their lives and broaden their horizons. Linguistic exchange is a kind of cultural exchange whereby linguistic material is transferred from one linguistic community to the other for various reasons. Sometimes the borrowing is necessary, for instance, to name a new concept in the culture, and sometimes borrowing constitutes a mere stylistic innovation that simply complements existing linguistic material such as Turkish **at** next to Greek **άλογο** ['alɔɣɔ] *'horse'*.

Finally, we have seen that borrowing often results in semantic shifts in the lexicon and that semantic shift follows various paths. These paths reflect the techniques employed by the speakers of the "borrowing" speech community who try to assign meanings to strings of phonemes they encounter. Some of these techniques are, among others, inaccurate identification of primary features, upgrading of peripheral or secondary features, and assignment of new features according to what is perceptible by the five senses. In this way, the introduction of Turkish words has enriched the Greek dialect spoken in Cyprus.

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